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REVIEW OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

A History of the Penal Laws against the Irish Catholics, from the Treaty of Limerick to the Union. By Henry Parnell, Esq. M. P. 8vo. p. p. 268. Fitzpatrick, Dublin, 1808. 5s. 5d.

IT is pleasing, in every point of view, political, moral, or religious, to observe the zeal and ability displayed for several years past, by Protestants of literary talents, in supporting the claims of their Catholic Countrymen. There is an age of chivalry, a gallant and generous spirit of adventure, which is founded on the best principles of human nature, and which, we fondly hope, will never pass away, as long as the many suffer oppression, and the liberal few feel for the injustice. Hercules, the most celebrated knight-errant of antiquity had to roam over the globe for achievements, adequate to his strength and worthy of his humanity. In later and not less barbarous times, it was the high and virtuous fashion of the day, to wander forth in quest of adventures, to rescue victims of oppression from giants of injustice, and to supply the defects of law and order by the valorous feats of individuals; but even at an era deemed so civilized as the present, there is a plentiful field for such generous, and gallant ambition, without going far from home. We rejoice to see our young Protestant authors, entering the lists of literary adventure, and breaking their first lances, in the Catholic cause, thus contributing, as far as lies in their power, to make a corrupt age heroic.

There might be a book made of the barbarism of civilized society. Generated, indeed, the most of them have been, amidst the gloom of superstition and at periods of the grossest ignorance; but they have a venomous vitality. They come forth, from time to time, in the most cultivated periods, like adders in the bright day, crossing our path, and startling even the philosopher. No vocation can be more glorious in intention and useful in effect, than to hunt out of society those noxious prejudices, that lurk and burrow in that mass of credulity and ignorance, which still disgraces our more smooth and polished times. To cleanse thoroughly the page of history from unfounded calumnies, and flagrant partialities, is an Herculean labour, that does not disgrace authors of the first reputation.

Historians are themselves so deeply stained with the passions and prejudices of their own stories, that, too often, they do little more than engrave more deeply in the minds of successive generations, the errors and faults of their forefathers, not to avoid, but to imitate them. Thus it happens, that after the lapse of centuries, the greater part of the English nation (a nation where information is but partially distributed) when they deign to consider the Catholic question, do obstinately continue to view it, solely, through the medium of party history, which at best exhibits a frightful resemblance of the truth. They will not allow any effect from the progress of time, or the change of circumstances, from the collision of social intercourse, or from the goodness of human nature triumphing over the excluding dogmas of superstition, and the proscriptions of party. As little will they look to the pressing exigencies of the present season, and the equal urgency of the future. How often have we wished that time had been suffered to cast the bulk of our worthless and wicked history into the cave of oblivion, furnishing, as it has done, and is still likely to do, so many pretexes for bigotry and intolerance, in opposition to the religion of Christianity, and the soundest principles of political economy. And, when we take up, even such *retrospective* views as the present, we do it with reluctance, and a sort of mental shudder, from an apprehension, that however well qualified the author may suppose himself to extinguish animosities, and conciliate parties he will himself soon adopt the embittered language which he reprobates, and revolt the feelings of one party, while he courts the sympathy and applause of another.

It is not meant that the present publication originates from motives merely of a party or a personal nature, from any sordid views of eventual self-interest, by becoming the champion of the Catholics, in order to serve the purposes of opposition in parliament. The truth is, we degrade the intrinsic worth, the glory, the pre-eminence of this high question, when we bring it down to the petty purposes of this or that ministry, of this or that opposition; and if the Catholics be as sensible of the magnitude of their question as we are, they will not so anxiously knock at the

doors of a Grenville, a Grattan, or a Sheridan, to know whether, at what times, and through what hands their petition is to be presented; for the greater such men are, the more they *must* be guided by what are called parliamentary motives, and the purposes of the day. They are incapable of giving advice upon the question. Let the Catholics knock at their own breasts, and take such advice as their own hearts can best afford them.

The present pamphlet evidently proceeds from a generous sympathy operating on the glowing temperament of youth, such as might be expected in the son of Sir John Parnell, the early companion and friend of the all accomplished Sir William Jones. Yet certainly there appears often an asperity of language and a vehemence of invective in this history, as it is called, probably caught from standing a short time on the tripod of Edmund Burke. It will tend more to irritate the Protestant than do service to the Catholic. We have been, and continue to be, the hearty friends of their claims; but we will not, with this author in sweeping and exceptionless clauses, ascribe their political disabilities "to the base and perfidious means adopted by a wicked legislature, to influence men's consciences by corrupt motives, and tempt and bribe them to apostacy." It has been by such a flow of ferocious diction, the offspring of distempered fancy, rather than of a lucid and orderly understanding, that parties have been kept disparted, and that men of letters, have, in these strange times, rather instigated to desperate hostility, and blown the trumpet to battle, than contributed to peace on earth, and good-will among mankind. It has been from the flaming brand of Edmund Burke, employed to set on fire the four quarters of the globe, that the political pamphleteers of these times, have lighted up their enthusiasm. Impartial posterity will judge this distinguished literary adventurer; and although now almost sainted in the calendar, the time will come, when he will appear in the light of another Peter the Hermit, preaching from the press, a crusade of things, and resembling his prototype in other particulars, best illustrated by the calamities of the present times, and the prospects of the future. Complete master of an abusive and vituperative rhetoric, he has influenced the stile and manner of minor authors; and on whatever subject they write, whether it be a discourse on the atonement, a poem on the penance of Hugo, or a new edition of the art of cookery, there must always be

found room for some splendid Burkesisms of stile and sentiment to scare the quiet reader, either in the body, or preface, or postscript of the publication.

We will not be frightened by Mr. Parnell's use or abuse of such epithets a "perfidious," "mockery of good faith," "ferocious arts," "restless tormentors," &c. &c. from asserting, that there can be found much more excuse for the first promulgation of the penal laws, than for making them as it were perpetual, long after their causes and motives had ceased to exist. Our ancestors were compelled to the code of conquest; and the circumstances of the times, did, in great part, apologize for, if they could not vindicate the first enactment of these martial laws. It is not by dealing out abusive epithets, and pouring maledictions over the graves of our forefathers, that we serve the truth and the right. It is more than probable, that had this ardent young disciple of Burke, sat in the parliament of that day, he would have been with the foremost, in voice, heart, and hand, to defeat the union of foreign and domestic foes, and to watch over the cradle of the Protestant religion. What we deplore, is, not the hard necessity, the *ultima ratio* which armed the laws, and maintained by its sinew, and its zeal, the renovation of the Constitution, and the reformation of Christianity, but it is the blind perverseness and bigotry of *modern times*, that persists in fearing where no fear is, or what is worse, that *counterfeit fear* in order, at every hazard, to keep the possession and monopoly of political power.

It would be much more candid for a good Protestant, as we take Mr. Parnell to be, and less like a party pamphleteer to place himself in the critical situation of the Protestants, at those truly perilous times; a translation of fancy and feeling, which, from hereditary, perhaps personal attachments, Mr. Burke was not capable of making. Indeed it is surprising that the very first paragraph of his own performance did not oftener stare Mr. Parnell in the face, or revive in his recollection, as it seems to carry a complete refutation of a great part of his pamphlet. We will transcribe it:

"When James abdicated the throne of England, he retired to France, to solicit the aid of Louis XIV. to enable him to secure the possession of Ireland where he was still acknowledged as the lawful sovereign. On the 12th of March 1689, James landed at Kinsale with about 1,200 of his own subjects in the pay of France, and 100 French officers. He was received

with open arms, and the whole country seemed to be devoted to him, for although the Protestants in the North had declared for the new government, their strength and number were inconsiderable, when compared with the forces of the Lord Deputy Tyrconnel. This minister had disarmed all the other Protestants in one day, and assembled an army of 30,000 foot, and 8000 cavalry. Addresses were poured in upon James from all quarters. The Established Clergy, among the rest congratulated him upon his arrival, a certain sign that his chance of success was not contemptible."

In such a fearful issue of affairs, with such inferiority of numbers, divided and dispersed, the glorious revolution as yet doubtful and undecided; the liberties both civil and religious, not merely of England, but of all Europe, depending upon the advance-guard of Protestants in this island; to what, under God, did we owe our deliverance from the fangs of a ferocious and vindictive tyrant, or how would Mr. Parnell have then conducted himself, when he tells us, that the Lord Deputy Tyrconnel, had disarmed "all the other protestants in one day?" What does Mr. Parnell think would have been the spirit and practice of the penal code against the Protestants, of which this was the precursor and specimen? The liberties of Europe both civil and religious were fought for and conquered at the battles of Boyne and Aughrim, and by the spirit and armed right hands of conquerors, were they, alone, to be maintained. It was, at such a time, subdued or be destroyed, disarm of all power or be yourselves exterminated. Fortify yourselves in your post, and completely overpower the inhabitants, or the reformation will be uprooted and Ireland will become an easy stepping-stool for a furious and vindictive bigot to mount again the British throne. It was for the best interests of humanity, of religion, and of liberty, that the Catholics should be subjugated...and they were subdued. If the Irish Catholics must be considered by the treaty of Limerick "as placed by it at that time in a situation of complete equality with their Protestant countrymen," all that can be said is, that knavery must have drawn up the articles, and folly or treason must have ratified them. The truth is, there was at this period an internecine war between the religious parties; acts of attainder were passed, and acts of settlement repealed, as each of them got the upper hand, and without dwelling on

the terms of this treaty which were certainly ambiguous, or its local limitations, the "*dura necessitas rerum et novitas regni*," no doubt made an interpretation most pleasing to the victorious party. Our Protestant ancestors were certainly actuated by the spirit of conquest, and surrounded and enveloped as they were, with a mass, whose principles were, at these times, still more hostile and persecuting, it is hard to say what other course could have been adopted, unless they had quietly merged into that mass, and melted down their honour, their allegiance, and their religion. The penal laws fenced the Protestant in his faith, and the colonist in his conquest. Nor was it possible to soften their rigour, or to stop their course, during the unsettled state of political affairs, during the uncertainty of a new succession to the throne, the occurrence of two rebellions, the monstrous ambition of Louis XIV. and the ever-planning pretensions of internal and external enemies. The effects of the penal laws were calamitous in many respects, but these laws balanced the numerical disproportion of the Protestants; they humiliated the Catholics to an incapacity of exerting their physical strength in favour of the exiled family, and when the terrors of the times had completely passed away, then the hostile spirit of the politico-religious parties became less stimulated by rival governments, and human nature had power and opportunity to display itself. Human nature, that amidst the deadly malice of party and personal ambition, in spite of the rancour of religious sects, rises in its loveliness, and, as with the combatants at Pharsalia prompts to cast away the javelin, and rush into the embrace of countryman and brother.

.....—Videre parentes,
Frontibus adversis, fraternaue coninus
arma,
Nec libuit mutare locum: tamen omnia
torpor
Pectora constrinxit: gelidusque in visce
ra sanguis
Perpulsâ pietate coit: totâque cohortes
Pila parata diu tensis tenuere lacertis.

Such retrospective views as the present are not perhaps the means best calculated to assimilate parties, into one people. It is not by the painful, reiterated, and declamatory recitation of the various penal laws, which hard necessity imposed, and which, like an useless and decayed piling, once a protection, but now an incumbrance, have been pulled up and cast into the flames; it is not, we say, by stringing

some diurnal documents of past events, by stitching together a few pages of the incoherent Curry, or detaching a few splinters from the ponderous Plowden, that any one will entitle himself even to a smile from the Muse of History, unless it be when she reads the title-page of this performance. We are more inclined to look *forward* than with the suspicious, timid, and *reverted* eyes of the hare, and to indulge in a hopeful confidence of the future. We like to rise from our humble retreat, like the lark, eager to invest herself in the first rays of the sun, while the rest of the world is involved in darkness, and the shadow of death. This may be called the flight of poetry, but it is referable, as we think, to a sound political philosophy.

There have some happy effects occurred from the revolutionary calamities of the times. These great events have had a powerful sway over the human mind, not merely agitating the feelings, but in all classes and descriptions of society, *lessening the intellect*. Europe has of late been a great school, in which the most knowing of the upper ranks have acquired information. It is among the upper classes, most particularly, that a change and improved knowledge has taken place with respect to the true nature and constitution of civilized society, the mutual relationship and reciprocal dependence of every class of the community. In consequence of this advancement of the public understanding, a greater degree of *fellows-feeling* has been diffused through society, in part, no doubt, owing to that sense of common danger which draws the interests, and with them the affections more closely together; but still, in greater part to be ascribed, as we are willing to believe, to a gradual revolution which has been of late silently and secretly taking place, among the proprietors of political power. A new growth of sentiment and behaviour, of principles and practice, has sprung up in that class, as a consequence of the peculiar circumstances of the times, and vegetates, as it were, on the lava of the French revolution.

We could illustrate this, in many particulars, but the progress of the Catholics in their claims, supplies a prominent instance. The panic of the day drove the ruling power into the Penal Laws. The panic of the day has driven the same power to repeal them. Mr. Pitt was probably an *early* convert to the Catholic claims; because, he must, *early*, have seen the necessity of consolidating all the physical strength of these kingdoms, against that power which was the grand object of his fears, and

which he hated with the inveterate enmity of a true Englishman. Mr. Fox was too great a philanthropist, to be a very good or a very popular Englishman. He was the representative of MAN. Had the human race been assembled in a vast plain, to choose a single delegate for the commonweal of human kind, Charles Fox would have been chosen by the universal acclamation of every nation, with *one* exception. Mr. Pitt studied the character of his country, and identified himself with its pride, and its partialities, above all, with its natural enmity against France.

Charles Fox was a friend to the Catholics, from the comprehension of his understanding, and the benevolence of his heart. William Pitt became their friend from his fears, and even this true *English* politician, became, a second time, in his life, impressed with the necessity of awakening the energies of the *whole* people; not so much the expediency, not so much the justice, but the *necessity* of kindling those sparks of truth, happiness and freedom, which impartial heaven has scattered on the ground of the human character, in all religious professions, and in every condition of life.

It is good for governments to be put upon their resources. The American Revolution, in the first instance, as Mr. Parnell has observed, but the French revolution more impressively, has had this effect. The first of all resources, but too often the last resorted to, is, what in periods of extreme danger, can be found, and found only in the hearts and hands of an united population, sensible of the value of their rights, and willing to die in defending them. It will, in our minds, be no small compensation for the calamities of the times, if they have, indirectly, contributed to re-instate our long suffering countrymen, in the full enjoyment of the constitution, no longer the prerogative of a party, but the common right of every member of the British Empire. The Catholics will then, no doubt, discharge their great debt of gratitude to those Protestants who have exerted themselves in their cause, and, in particular, will acknowledge their obligations to Mr. H. Parnell. X.

Marmion; a tale of Flodden Field, by Walter Scott, esq. 8vo. pp. 317; second edition; Edinburgh, Constable; London, Miller, & Co. 1808, price 12s. boards.

Few modern poems have given rise to greater variety of opinion than this second production of the celebrated Scot-